WILL FORTE IS BEARDED AND ALONE IN NEW SITCOM

BONUS: JANUARY JONES CRASHES OUR INTERVIEW. PAGE 14

metro
BOSTON Weekend, February 27 - March 1, 2015 www.metro.us | t: MetroBOS | f: MetroBoston

WILL POWER

Old and new. Will Smith shares space with "It" girl Margot Robbie in the new comic thriller "Focus." Robbie talks to us about adjusting to stardom, while Smith talks about his "full-on, steamy, grown man-ness." PAGE 10

Margot Robbie plays an aspiring con artist who gets involved with longtime pro Will Smith in the scamming comedy "Focus." / FRANK MASI

Monday is Judgment Day for space savers

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Tsarnaev lawyers want delay or dismissal

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Picard: No thanks to pitch clocks in MLB

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1 NEWS

Top 3

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"Space savers" — formerly called "chairs" or "tables" — line Farragut Road in South Boston. / NICOLAUS CZARNECKI, METRO

Monday is Judgment Day for space savers

Parking. Things are about to get rough as Boston instructs motorists to clear out their precious proxies.

Prepare for war. You can delay the T, but don't take my parking space.

The city will begin removing space savers — those ubiquitous and parochial signs of winter in the city — starting next Monday during garbage collection.

The savers are meant to be used on a short-term basis, with 48 hours after the last flake falls being suggested as a guideline from Mayor Marty Walsh's office.

Parking can grow contentious when the snow piles up in Boston. Lawn chairs, golf bags, garbage cans, coolers, even oversized teddy bears are plopped down in the middle of parking spots for days. Sometimes notes are attached to the space savers. "If you move these chairs, I will break your window. Don't be disrespectful," read one such recent missive in Boston.

Another read, "Respect the chair! This is my 2nd time digging out a spot! Please!!! –A high school teacher who gets home late + leaves early."

Yet another stated, "Whomever had the audacity to take my space savers & spot, [expletive] you! Sincerely, The guy who spent 3 hours shoveling it out."

The practice of space saving is sometimes a source of tension between Boston neighbors.

Earlier this month, a Chelsea woman said her car was vandalized — three of the windows were smashed — after she parked in an open spot in Southie. The side of another car was spraypainted in Boston earlier this month after the driver moved a space saver to park in a space.

In December 2013, a Southie man broke a 61-year-old man's jaw in a fight over a parking space.

In making the announcement about the space savers, Mayor Walsh urged residents to treat their neighbors with respect and to use good judgment following snowstorms.

Under a pilot program, space savers have been banned in the South End this winter.

Visit **Metro.us** to read more about the lingering snow woes of Boston.

Quoted

"I'm asking residents to remain respectful of their neighbors and their property as the process of space saver removal begins."
Mayor Marty Walsh

DANNY MCDONALD
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MBTA

Commuter rail service to return to normal on March 30

Keolis International CEO Bernard Tabary announced that under a plan approved by Gov. Charlie Baker, the commuter rail system, which feeds into suburbs south, west and north of Boston, will be operating at 78 percent passenger capacity by Friday, with full service promised by March 30. SHNS

MBTA

Lawmakers want answers on T disruptions

State lawmakers on Thursday grilled MBTA and state transportation officials about snow-induced breakdowns and delays that have plagued the antiquated transit system in recent weeks.

A Senate committee called the informational hearing, which came a day after the MassDOT board named state highway director Frank DePaola interim general manager of the Boston-area transit system.

The current MBTA GM, Beverly Scott, announced earlier this month that she would resign. METRO

Commuters wait.
NICOLAUS CZARNECKI, METRO

Boston University's Commonwealth Avenue campus. / NICOLAUS CZARNECKI

BU. Frat under fire for misogynistic party promos

Boston University has withdrawn recognition of a fraternity after learning that frat members promoted a holiday party with sexually suggestive and misogynistic videos and photographs.

The images depicted "a culture of abusive behavior that openly celebrates verbal sexual coercion, belittling women, grabbing, groping, forced kissing, and the badgering of women for sex," Assistant Dean of Students John Battaglino wrote in a Feb. 6 letter condemning Kappa Sigma's involvement, BU Today reported.

The Dec. 10 "University Blackout" party was set to happen at Boston Royale nightclub. The event was eventually canceled, the report said.

The party promotion images reportedly included naked women and women kissing each other.

"'Blackout parties' have become associated with a social sanctioning that it is okay to take advantage of intoxicated women," Battaglino said.

Kappa Sigma's Boston chapter President Nicholas Supple told The Daily Free Press that "while being suspended from campus is never a good thing, we're confident that we will be able to find common ground with the school." MORGAN ROUSSEAU

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Richard Estes, *Baby Doll Lounge*, 1978, oil on canvas. Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire. Museum Purchase: The Henry Melville Fuller Acquisition Fund, 2014.48. © Richard Estes, courtesy Marlborough Gallery, New York.

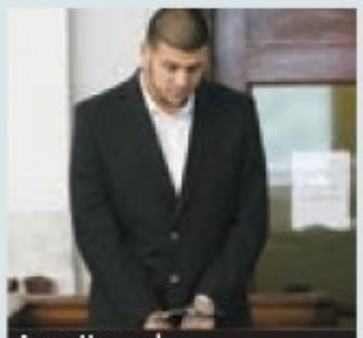
Still Life: 1970s Photorealism is sponsored by Hitchiner Manufacturing Company, the Botnick Family Foundation, M. Christine Dwyer & Michael Huxtable and Dorothea & David Jensen.

John Baeder, detail of *Stardust Motel*, 1977. Oil on canvas, 58 x 70 in. (147.32 x 177.8 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, Richard Brown Baker, B.A. 1935, Collection. Courtesy of the artist.

Court

Hernandez bought drinks, smoked pot before murder: witness

Former New England Patriots star Aaron Hernandez smoked marijuana and bought food and drinks for friends at a Rhode Island restaurant hours before prosecutors say he fatally shot an acquaintance, a witness testified on Thursday.


Aaron Hernandez
THE BOSTON GLOBE

Kelly Rose Belanger, former manager of the South Street Cafe in Providence, said Hernandez arrived at the restaurant with a woman and other people around 9:30 p.m. on June 16, 2013, and at one point stepped out to smoke marijuana with another man.

"I asked them to put it out because the other customers could smell it, and they did," Belanger said at Massachusetts Superior Court in Hernandez's trial on charges of murdering Odin Lloyd, a man who was dating his fiancée's sister.

Hernandez used his credit card to pay for items including 10 "Sex on the Beach" cocktails, 11 Hennessey cognacs and two orders of baked stuffed shrimp, she said. REUTERS

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Accused Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev in sketch by Jane Collins / NICOLAUS CZARNECKI, METRO

Tsarnaev lawyers want delay, dismissal

Court. Jury selection is finally wrapping up in the Tsarnaev case.

Lawyers for accused Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev on Thursday filed a last-gasp request to dismiss the charges against him or delay the start of the trial next week, contending that court officials had violated their own rules during jury selection.

After randomly assigning numbers to the more than 1,350 people who reported for initial selection early last month, the court re-ordered the jurors based on arrival time, the attorneys said.

That, they contended, resulted in fewer potential black jurors being screened during the past two months of in-person questioning that wrapped up on Wednesday. They also contend that people who live within the Boston city limits and those under 30 and over 70 were disproportionately under-represented.

The final phase of jury selection is set to take place on Tuesday, when prosecutors and defense attorneys will whittle down the field of about 70 provisionally qualified jurors to 18 people, including 12 jurors and six alternates.

Formal seating of a jury and opening statements in the trial are expected to begin Wednesday.

Tsarnaev faces the possibility of the death penalty if he is convicted of killing three people and injuring 264 in the April 15, 2013, bombing. REUTERS

O'Keefe picks his five favorite Boston startups

For exclusive commentary, visit Metro.us/blogs.

#DownloadBoston

TOM O'KEEFE

@BostonTweet

Tom O'Keefe is @BostonTweet and the founder of #DownloadBoston, a local movement to increase the awareness of Boston-based consumer startups.

Boston has a ton of great startups, but these are my Top 5.

Runkeeper

I'm training for the Boston Marathon, and without Runkeeper, I would be lost.

TableList

I'm not a big club guy, but I love how TableList is automating a previously very fragmented and difficult process: booking a VIP table at a club or lounge. Think Uber, but for clubs.

Bootstrap Compost

Bootstrap Compost uses bicycle trailers to pick up your kitchen scraps and then transport them to local farms for compost.

A simple niche idea that is not only eliminating waste but also creating a better community.

Bridj

Bridj is an alternative to the T that provides an on-time, comfortable and easy-to-book commute via your iPhone. With the recent MBTA breakdown, Bridj is proving that private startups might just be the best solution to public transportation.

Spritz

Spritz is streaming word technology that allows you to read up to 1000 WPM.

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More picks

Check out O'Keefe's column next week for more of his favorite startup picks.

Online dating spikes as snow falls: experts

Boston. The local online dating pool has apparently grown with every inch of snow.

Reach out and touch someone. / NICOLAUS CZARNECKI, METRO

If you're living in Massachusetts, chances are you've spent more time than usual on phone apps, according to a local analytics firm.

Localytics, based in downtown Boston, examined more than 30 million sessions across thousands of apps between Jan. 15 and Feb. 15.

Their findings? The more snow, the more people used apps. On snow days — defined as when local universities canceled classes — app usage increased by almost 30 percent. The highest levels of usage took place during or after significant snowfall: Jan. 27, Feb. 2 and Feb. 9.

"My surprise was at the amount of usage that is up — 30 percent is a very big jump," said Dave Hoch, a business analyst at Localytics.

And snowed-in locals looking for love have been firing up their computers more often in their quest to find the one, according to Match.com.

Match says that during recent blizzards in the Northeast, email "initiations" has gone up 60 percent.

According to Dr. Dan Pollets, a Medford-based certified sex therapist, the uptick in Match usage is "all about creating possibility for yourself." Essentially, Pollets says when we feel miserable, we turn to what soothes us and causes hope. Possibility of escape from a cruel winter, he said, is just a click away.

Vatsal Bhardwaj, a general manager for Match.com North America, said it is typical for Match to see increased activity when there is cold and inclement weather.

"Whenever the country is bundled up inside, singles are undoubtedly seeking companionship," said Bhardwaj.

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Three things you need to know

1 'Jihadi John' uncovered

The masked "Jihadi John" killer who fronted Islamic State beheading videos has been identified as Mohammed Emwazi, a British computer programming graduate from a well-to-do London family.

The black-clad militant brandishing a knife and speaking with an English accent was shown in videos released by Islamic State (IS) apparently decapitating hostages including Americans, Britons and Syrians.

The 26-year-old militant used the videos to threaten the West, admonish its Arab allies and taunt President Barack Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron before petrified hostages cowering in orange jump suits. REUTERS

2 Tougher Internet rules hit U.S. cable, telecom companies

U.S. regulators on Thursday imposed the toughest rules yet on Internet service providers, aiming to ensure fair treatment of all web traffic through their networks.

The Federal Communications Commission voted along party lines, with Democrats in favor, to approve new "net neutrality" rules that seek to restrict broadband providers' power to control download speeds on the web, for instance by potentially giving preference to companies that can afford to pay more. REUTERS

3 Lives, weapons at stake if budget caps remain: U.S. Navy, Marines

Navy and Marine officials told lawmakers that training and weapons programs would be hit hardest if Congress fails to remove budget caps known as "sequestration" that are due to resume in fiscal 2016.

General Joseph Dunford, commandant of the Marine Corps, said the result would be that his military branch would not be able to respond as quickly to crises around the world, or the lives of Marines could be in jeopardy. REUTERS

Peter Pan

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Try this one habit to improve your zzz's

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Quality shut-eye is important for health. / ISTOCK

If you're trying to get better sleep, conventional wisdom has just been unseated by meditation.

Short of prescriptions, the recommendations for getting quality sleep have long been things like setting a bedtime routine and keeping the TV out of the bedroom. But a new study just released by the University of Southern California in Los Angeles puts a traditional program for changing poor sleep habits up against one where participants were trained in a mindful meditation practice.

Though the study was small, involving 49 people with disturbed sleep patterns, Dr. David S. Black and his team found that those taught meditation techniques improved their sleep by 27 percent, while the better bedtime routine group only showed an 11 percent rise in sleep quality. The meditation group also showed improvement in secondary symptoms like insomnia, depression and fatigue severity. Both groups saw comparable, moderate declines in anxiety, stress and inflammation.

Sleep disturbances are estimated to affect half of all Americans over age 55 and are associated with higher levels of fatigue, mood problems like depression and a general lower quality of life.

Another study last week found an additional benefit of meditation: It helped stall age-related decline in brain function.

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CULTURE

Beats working

Her dream job

Margot Robbie has taken on a lot of jobs as an actress — con artist, flight attendant, Wall Street trophy wife — but there's one occupational aspiration she's still holding onto:

"I always have this weird ... not fascination, maybe aspiration? Kind of like a secret little dream to work in an office," Robbie tells Metro. "I hear about my friends having office jokes or an office scavenger hunt or office parties. It just sounds kind of fun." Nobody break her heart with the truth, OK?

The real Margot Robbie

Q&A. The "Focus" starlet prefers youth hostels, thank you very much.

MARGOT ROBBIE PLAYS A CON ARTIST IN "FOCUS."
ALL PHOTOS FRANK MASI

Australian actress and "The Wolf of Wall Street" star Margot Robbie picked up some interesting new skills while making the con artist drama "Focus," including how to lift people's wallets. She also, as it turns out, prefers staying in hostels when on vacation, rather than boring, stodgy hotels.

So you were on vacation in Croatia when you heard about your "Focus" audition?
When I got the call, I was staying on the island of Hvar, and I was off that day to all the other islands — the Blue Cave, the Green Cave. It's insane. It's one of those hidden gems, but people are really catching onto it now so it's probably not going to be untouched for long.

Considering how busy you are and how much your profile is rising, shouldn't you have graduated to regular hotels by now?
Yeah, everyone's like, "How do you still do that?" I don't know, I've just kept doing it and it's not been a problem, weirdly enough. I stayed at a hostel in Ireland earlier this year while I was shooting "Tarzan," and it was fine.

You know you don't have to, right?
Yeah, but it's way more fun, though. You meet so many people in a hostel. When you're in a hotel, things don't really happen, you know? When you stay in a hostel, you just get taken off on tangents. You wake up and suddenly someone from Belgium is sleeping in the bed next to you, and they tell you about a part of town you never would've discovered sitting in your hotel room. Plus, it's like $20 a night for a really nice hostel room. It's such a bargain. And I know I can probably afford to stay in hotels now, but I can't get this ingrained notion of saving money out of my head. I can't justify wasting money.

There are so many great movies about con artists.
I guess, for both actors choosing to play those roles and people watching the films, it's living vicariously through someone else and doing things you can't do in your own life.

But then pickpocketing in movies is so much sexier than in real life.
In the real-world pickpocketing, you get a whole bunch of junk and then you've got to find a way to sell it. Once you actually sell it, you're left with no money. There are no rich pickpockets. You're basically Oliver Twist. And he wore rags.

But, his friend wore a top hat.
Yeah, he was a baller.

NED EHRBAR
@Nedrick
ned.ehrbar@metro.us

Bonus question

Apollo Robbins, your sleight-of-hand consultant, says you were the best pickpocketing student among the cast. Do you think you could still pull it off?

When I was training, I definitely could've pulled it off — not to toot my own horn — but even when I was super slick at it, having the confidence to do the pulls was the hardest part, and I just don't have the balls for it. I could definitely steal from someone right now if I didn't have to engage with them. If they were, like, eating and I could take something out of their bag, or if they're walking in the street, I could probably take their wallet or phone out of their back pocket. But the inner breast pocket, front pockets, I'd be too scared to do now.

The star. How about some quirky, context-free Will Smith quotes?

Will Smith's son, Jaden, has become renowned for his off-the-wall proclamations, whether on Twitter or in interviews. But as it turns out, the apple doesn't far fall from the tree. So we're going to the source for some pure, uncut Smith family wisdom, from the "Focus" presser.

"This is one of the first times, in my career, where it was full-on, steamy, grown man-ness, and emotion."

"Reality almost does not matter at all. When you're talking to a person, it only matters what they are perceiving."

"I no longer measure the quality of my self on whether or not somebody else thinks what I paint is beautiful."

"You only need them to perceive you as a loving husband. You don't necessarily need to be one."

"I completely released the concept of goal orientation and got into path orientation."

"It's actually nerve-wracking for me, sometimes, to walk into a new space."

"I did some stuff [as a kid]. There just wasn't no Twitter back then."

"Everybody is running a con. We choose our clothes. We do our hair. Everyone wants to be perceived a certain way, to gain the things that they have decided are the things that they want in their life."

"Lying and loving don't go together."

"Everything is a con."

NED EHRBAR

Will Smith lords over the grifting comedy "Focus." / WARNER BROS.

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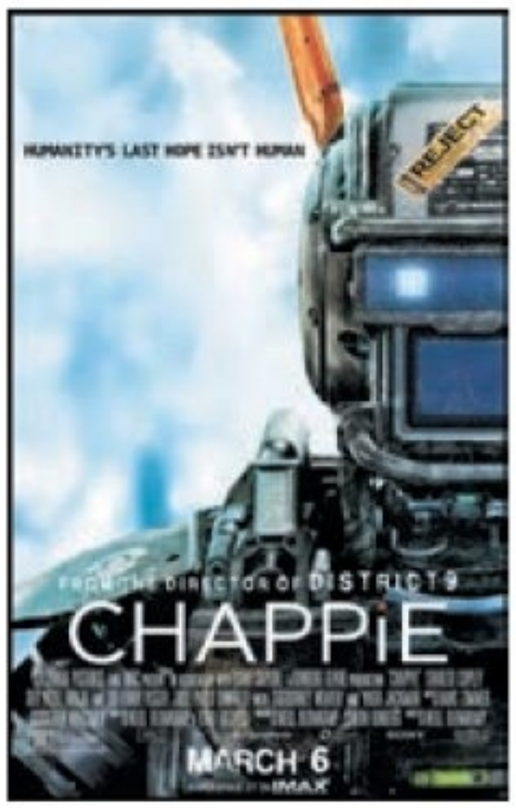

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Review

'The Lazarus Effect'

A low-budget horror number boasting such unlikely cast members as Mark Duplass and Donald Glover — not to mention an actually well-used Olivia Wilde — is all but setting itself up for disappointment. Even considering that, it's almost impressive how dumb and rote "The Lazarus Effect" becomes. Concerning scientists who wind up using their experimental resuscitating serum on one of their own (Wilde) after she dies, it goes from promisingly smart to full-on stupid once Wilde has turned into a mere monster. It's beneath anonymous hackwork, as most careless studio chillers — say, last year's "Ouija" — would know better than to kill the black guy first.

At its heart, this is an exploration of grief and delusion, with Duplass' character throwing caution and logic to the wind to ease his sorrows. But this idea is quickly abandoned. At least Wilde is trying. An actress regularly called on to do far less than she can, she at least gets a chance to show off her range, going from believable, complex person to anonymous boogeyperson. She deserves better. MP

OLIVIA WILDE GOES TO THE DARK SIDE IN "THE LAZARUS EFFECT." / RELATIVITY MEDIA

Will Smith isn't having as much fun as Margot Robbie in "Focus." / WARNER BROTHERS

Con movie. Will Smith lets Margot Robbie steal 'Focus' from under him

Will Smith plays a seasoned confidence man who takes under his wing a hopeless amateur (Margot Robbie). But is he scamming her? Or is he actually in love?

The lowdown: Much like the submarine picture, the con artist movie is one of those genres that filmmakers screw up only if they're trying to screw it up. "Focus" is more ambitious. It aspires to the likes of the grotesquely underrated Julia Roberts-Clive Owen-starring "Duplicity": a con movie in which professional liars fall for each other and only wind up wondering if they really can love at all. That may sound soapy, but in this profession, it plays like existential dread — a job that by definition requires eternal loneliness.

"Focus" doesn't get as far as "Duplicity." It's much too sloppy, especially in its middle section, to do the complex thing it wants to do. It even peaks early, with a set piece that begins unassumingly then slowly, confidently steps things up, increment by increment, until viewers' nerves are shattered.

Still, it's hard to screw up a con movie, and filmmakers Glenn Ficarra and Jon Requa ("I Love You Philip Morris") know a thing or two about long cons. There are some doozies where the reveal, if not the build-up itself, is hugely pleasurable. Even the notion that our two leads don't have sparkling chemistry winds up making a kind of sense. Smith is aiming for Golden Age movie-star charisma, but he's too laid-back, especially for the pepped-up, kooky Robbie. Instead of coasting on a shared wavelength, he lets her have the movie. And she happily takes it. MATT PRIGGE

Review

'Focus'

Directors: Glenn Ficarra, John Requa

Stars: Will Smith, Margot Robbie

Rating: R

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TV watch list

On "The Good Wife," Ed Asner guest stars as a big campaign donor, but you may know him as Mr. Fredricksen from the cutest/saddest movie ever, "Up." / CBS

COMEDY

'Saturday Night Live'

"Fifty Shades of Grey" star Dakota Johnson steps in to host this week, meaning you can expect at least one uncomfortable parody of the movie. **SATURDAY, 11:30 P.M., NBC**

DRAMA

'The Good Wife'

Alicia and Frank Prady vie for the same big campaign donation, while Diane and Cary work on a case for Colin Sweeney (Dylan Baker), who says an unflattering TV character is based on him. **SUNDAY, 9 P.M., CBS**

DRAMA

'Downton Abbey'

In a very "Downton" plotline, the family goes to a shooting party hosted by Lord Sinderby in Northumberland. Just what you're doing with your weekend, right? **SEASON FINALE, SUNDAY, 9 P.M., PBS** LISA WEIDENFELD

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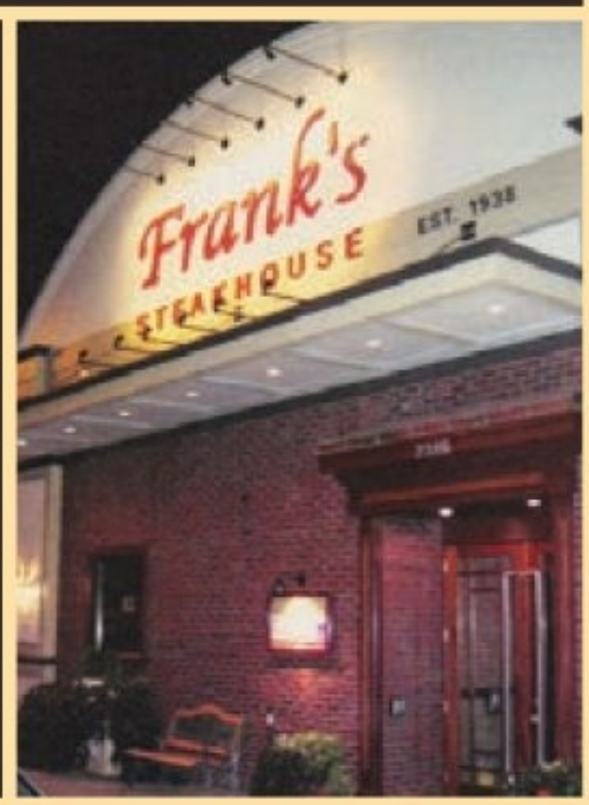

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Will Forte outlives us all

Interview. The comedian plays the only survivor of a catastrophic event on his new show.

Catch Forte (and his ball friends) in "The Last Man on Earth" this Sunday at 9 p.m. on Fox in the one-hour premiere. / JORDIN ALTHAUS, FOX

Will Forte stars in the very high-concept "The Last Man on Earth," a new comedy that is basically what it sounds like. His Phil Miller is the only man left on the planet, and the series has fun with the ways Phil passes his time, from bowling over a stack of filled aquariums to mocking Wilson from "Cast Away," before desperately creating his own group of named ball friends. We talked to Forte at a party, where he was gracious enough to be interviewed even though he'd misplaced his cell phone.

Were you nervous at all about being the only character?
That was very exciting, to think about that. What we had to do was get Fox on board with that. They claimed from the beginning that they were OK with that, and we were skeptical, and they lived up to their word, and they were great. They let us do the show we wanted to do, and it was very exciting. We wanted to do something that was a little different, and that was by design, and they have been so wonderfully supportive.

WILL FORTE
JIM SMEAL, BEIMAGES

How did you come up with what he would do with all that free time?
It was a lot of just figuring out with the writers what we would do in that situation and a lot of our own wish fulfillment, so that was a really fun part of the process.

I heard you came up with all the ball names.
I named all the balls, and I drew all the faces on the balls because I'm a control freak.

Is it hot to film with the beard out in the desert?
It wasn't that bad. The beard was never a huge problem except for eating. Eating was a huge pain in the butt.

LISA WEIDENFELD
@LisaWeidenfeld
lisa.weidenfeld@metro.us

Party talk

An interruption

Toward the end of our conversation, "Mad Men" star January Jones joined us. She's been announced as a cast member, but no details about her character have been released.

January Jones: I need to talk to you about something.
Forte: OK.
Jones: One last question.

Who do you play?
Jones: I play Betty Draper Francis.
Forte: She might be a dream sequence or a flashback. We're keeping some mysteries in the show. It's exciting because the show goes in a bunch of twisty-turny areas.
Jones: He can't say anything.
Forte: Fox has been really great about helping us keep secrets.

The show is an enigma!
Jones: With everything in the media being so open and everything in your face, it's nice to have something kept secret, right?
Forte: The media so far has been helping us keep the secrets and it's great. But she's a vital or non-vital part of the show.
Jones: I concur.

Mystery man: Jon Benjamin asked me to give you this. [He plants a kiss on Forte.] And also this. [He hands Forte his cell phone.]
Forte: Oh my god, thank you very much. That's it, that's the one!

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THEATER

'Albatross'

Through Sunday
Paramount Center
559 Washington St., Boston
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www.paramountboston.org
The Poets' Theater presents this new adaptation of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's wild seafaring mini-epic "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," starring Benjamin Evett. Coleridge's story of a man cursed by an act of arrogance — shooting a bird he was told not to shoot — has haunted generations of readers with its lurid, proto-cinematic vision of divine retribution and the natural fury.

'Wit'

Through Saturday
Calderwood Pavilion
527 Tremont St., Boston
$15-$20, 617-933-8600
www.bostontheatrescene.com
Boston Center for American Performance presents this play by Margaret Edson, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1999. It tells the story of Vivian, a professor who specializes in the English metaphysical poet John Donne. A diagnosis of terminal cancer forces her to rethink her distant, rationalistic approach, reflect on her past and embrace the dimension of life that lies beyond reason.

JORDAN CURTIS HUGHES

MUSIC

Wolf Alice

Sunday, 8 p.m.
Middle East Upstairs, 472 Mass. Ave., Cambridge, $12, 18+, 866-777-8932, www.ticketweb.com
London band Wolf Alice manages to pull off one of the hardest moves in alternative rock: making the old quiet-verse, loud-chorus grunge trick sound fresh and exciting. But they aren't just some grunge throwback — that's only one song, "Moaning Lisa Smile." Each of their songs is different. They could go anywhere from here, and it'll probably be somewhere great.

ART

Someday Never Comes

Friday, 7 p.m.
The Uniun
11 Sandborn Ct., Somerville
Free, 617-501-1994
www.facebook.com/theuniun
Street art has gained a lot of ground toward acceptance as a legitimate art form in recent years — by everyone except the police, at least. Even Banksy, the world's most famous street artist, has to maintain strict anonymity. Likewise, the local street artists featured in this show are identified only by their tags—but that's all the info you need.

MUSIC

Altan

Saturday, 8 p.m.
Somerville Theater
55 Davis Sq., Somerville
$30, 617-876-4275
www.worldmusic.org
Formed in 1987, Altan is one of the best-selling, most popular Irish folk acts. Over the years they've brought the Irish language music of their home county, Donegal, to audiences around the world. They recorded their latest album, "The Widening Gyre," in Nashville — an appropriate place, given the influence of Irish traditional music on American country music.

MAGIC

Christopher Grace: The Blindfolded Madman

Saturday through March 14
Plaza Theater
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'Blizzard Voices'

Thursday, March 5, 8 p.m.
Jordan Hall at NEC
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bmop.org
The Boston Modern Orchestra Project's final concert of the season offers drama and virtuosity with a host of local celebrities and new faces. Paul Moravec's compelling oratorio "The Blizzard Voices," a tribute to the pioneer spirit with texts by former Poet Laureate Ted Kooser, features some of the city's most beloved singers. John Harbison's Concerto for Bass Viol puts the spotlight on the lively low-register sound of bassist Edwin Barker, while Composition Competition winner Stephanie Ann Boyd's Ondine gives voice to a water sprite in a unique orchestral fantasia. Gil Rose will conduct.

SPONSORED

'Mother Hicks'

By Suzan Zeder / Directed by Megan Sandberg-Zakian
Saturday, 2 p.m., 7:30 p.m., Sunday, 2 p.m.
ParamountMainStage
559 Washington St.
$10-20. 617-824-8000.
Three strangers find hope for themselves through each other during the dark days of the Great Depression. "Mother Hicks" (part 1 of the Ware Trilogy) is an evocative, family-friendly show for all ages filled with poetry and live music. It will be performed in American Sign Language as well as English.

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Horoscope

♓ Pisces | Feb. 19-March 20
A preoccupation with professional responsibilities will take its toll on an important relationship. Friction is likely unless you make a focused effort to nurture what you've got.

♈ Aries | March 21-April 20
An expensive vacation will lead to debt. However, you can add a spark to your day with a congenial gathering of friends. You don't need cash to have a good time.

♉ Taurus | April 21-May 21
Beneficial changes can be made if you join forces with like-minded people. Superiors will be receptive to your ideas if you present facts and offer solutions.

♊ Gemini | May 22-June 20
Don't be afraid to ask for help if you are feeling drained or disappointed about a personal issue. Look to a trusted friend for his or her perspective and guidance.

♋ Cancer | June 21-July 22
You'll experience a low-energy cycle. You can improve your mood by getting involved in activities or hobbies that bring you joy and a sense of accomplishment.

♌ Leo | July 23-Aug. 22
You need to take better care of yourself. You cannot be at your best if you give in to overindulgence. Use your imagination and envision a healthier and happier you.

♍ Virgo | Aug. 23-Sept. 22
You will be disappointed by someone who reneges on a promise. In order to meet a deadline, put in extra hours. You will receive full credit for your efforts.

♎ Libra | Sept. 23-Oct. 22
Don't be too hard on yourself. You have the intelligence and intuition to succeed. Trust in your abilities is more important than the opinions of others.

♏ Scorpio | Oct. 23-Nov. 21
You'll face a minor disagreement. Do your best to keep the peace by making concessions and sharing household responsibilities. Being flexible will spare you grief and improve the outcome.

♐ Sagittarius | Nov. 22-Dec. 21
You need to remain open to innovative ideas and educational opportunities. Positive changes are possible if you branch out and refuse to settle for less when you can have more.

♑ Capricorn | Dec. 22-Jan. 20
Your sense of humor and quick wit will lead to greater popularity. Others will be startled to see how entertaining you can be. Laughter will do you good.

♒ Aquarius | Jan. 21-Feb. 18
Don't hold back when it comes to sharing your creativity. Lucrative gains are imminent if you attract the attention of intellectual allies. EUGENIA LAST

Letters to the editor

An exchange of pipelines: People for gas

Re: 'Keystone won't create jobs' (Metro, Feb. 26) Whenever the subject of allowing the Keystone pipeline to go forward is mentioned, one can expect some hysterical environmental objection in spite of the fact that it would create many jobs, help both the Canadian economy and energy security in the U.S. and is supported by a majority of Americans. I think Obama and the Republicans should do some horse trading: Allow Keystone to go forward and in exchange Republicans will allow Obama to have the temporary suspension of deportations of illegal aliens that he wants.
GEORGE CHRISTIAN JR., VIA EMAIL

Snow business

Small lyric change to, "There's No Business Like Show Business" by Irving Berlin:

There's no business like snow business like no business I know/ Everything about it is appealing, everything that traffic will allow/ Nowhere could you get that happy feeling when you are selling pounds of snow!
DAVID SNIECKUS, VIA EMAIL

Bad policy

President Obama's decision to reform America by pulling the U.S. off the world stage as a leader and a beacon of freedom in a world of dictatorships and fanatics is proving to be a mistake of grave proportions: The ISIS expansion and murders continue. Putin is imposing his will on Ukraine, which will be part of Russia when Putin decides the apple is ripe for picking. The turmoil in Africa increases with Boko Haram's slaughtering of Muslims and Christians. The collapse of Yemen, Libya and Syria mean all have become havens for terrorists. Obama's policy of retreat and disengagement will leave the U.S. and the world much worse off. JOHN MCLAUGHLIN

letters@metro.us
Keep them as brief as possible, preferably under 100 words. Metro reserves the right to edit all letters. Please include your name and contact info.

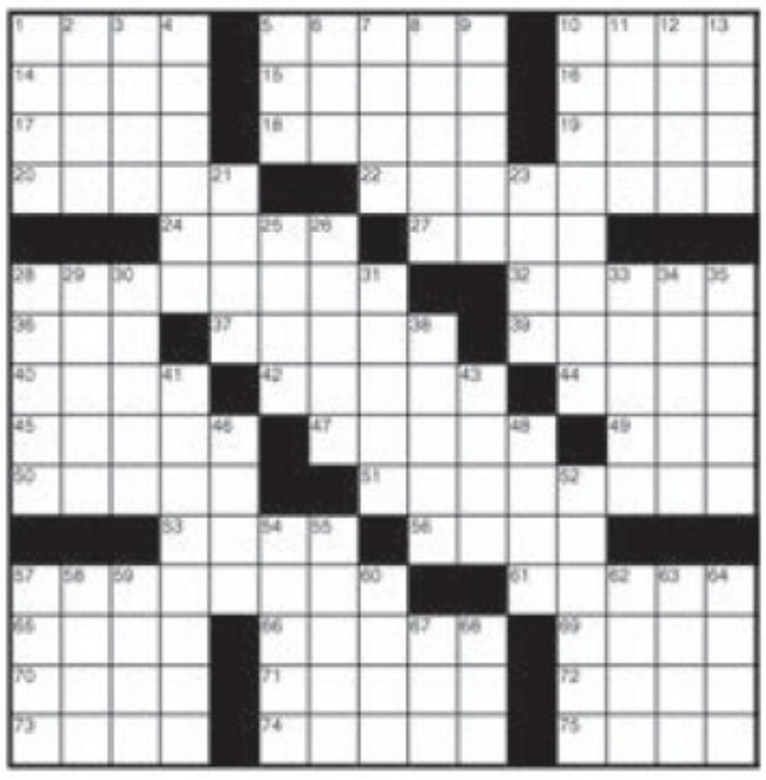
Sudoku: Easy and hard

5		7					8	
				9		7		4
	6		7				3	5
1					9	8		
		6	5	4	3	1		
		5	8					2
2	9				7		4	
6		1		2				
	4					9		1

		4	7					2
2	1			5			3	6
					8	9		
1	8				5			
4		5				3		7
			9				8	1
		1	5					
3	2			1			7	5
7					2	1		

How to play
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

Crossword



Across
1 Microbiology gel
5 Unpaid
10 Meatloaf serving
14 High Asian desert
15 Less
16 Ice-fishing need
17 Burglar's take
18 Kid or rib
19 Reed instrument
20 Top story
22 Eliminate (2 wds.)
24 Collars
27 Rabbit dish
28 Aussie hopper
32 Former frosh
36 Brady bill opposer
37 Lowest ebb
39 Traffic indicator
40 Dumpster output
42 Ocean, in Mongolian
44 Genial
45 Turns up
47 Minority groups
49 Belly dance instrument
50 Tiny shrimp
51 Way out
53 Vast ages
56 Thick carpeting
57 Took a poll
61 Cellist — Casals
65 "Watermark" chanteuse
66 Magna cum –
69 Roulette color
70 TV genie portrayer
71 Earthenware pots
72 Well-behaved kid
73 Battery terminal
74 "Bye Bye Bye" band
75 Pretentious

Down
1 Turkish official
2 Zodiac animal
3 Just touch
4 Ticking off
5 Over and over
6 Itty-bitty
7 "— — framed!"
8 Twig-and-mud homes
9 "— Balls of Fire"
10 Ready for discount
11 Gray wolf
12 Slugger Moises —
13 Root vegetable
21 "Slither" actor
23 Butte cousin
25 Headless nail
26 Soft drinks
28 Engine noise
29 Intense feeling
30 Model – Campbell
31 Edmonton puckster
33 Title below abbot
34 Conjurer's first word?
35 Nobel or Garbo
38 5K and 10K
41 To the point
43 Have poison ivy
46 Wild plum
48 Motel freebie
52 African nation
54 Parachute material
55 Closes tightly
57 Flow slowly
58 Loosen
59 Blended whiskeys
60 As expected
62 Rude person
63 Cheerful tune
64 Paris hub
67 Aykroyd or Rather
68 PC key

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JUST SAY NO TO PITCH CLOCKS ON MLB PITCHERS

Opinion

DANNY PICARD

DANNYPICARD

"The Danny Picard Show" airs every weekday at DannyPicard.com. Danny can also be heard on WEEI 93.7 FM and seen on CSNNE.

I hear it everywhere: Major League Baseball needs to "speed up the game."

They aren't my words. It comes from the mouths and keyboards of people who can't watch a three-hour ball game, which is the average length of a Major League game (three hours and two minutes, to be exact).

Reacting to the outcry for a quicker sport, MLB will implement new pace-of-play rules this season, which include hitters keeping one foot in the batter's box after a pitch unless he swings, "time" is called by the umpire or a wild pitch is thrown.

And while an official "pitch clock" won't be used in the Majors this season, it seems to only be a matter of time until it's implemented. That is unfortunate.

I'm firmly against the idea of a pitch clock in baseball.

Will it speed up the game? Sure. But will it get more people to watch? That's where the conversation gets interesting. Because after all, what's the point of attempting to speed up the game if it won't increase the audience?

Here's what I know: People love to complain. And in the world of social media, common complaints can easily turn into demonstration. I get it; nobody's picketing in front of new MLB commissioner Rob Manfred's office. But the call for a quicker game seems loud enough to where, I guess, anything is now possible.

These people tell me a pitch clock will get them to watch, that a faster pace-of-play will all of a sudden be must-see television in their eyes. Of course, saying that is one thing. Actually going through with it and watching more baseball than they have in the past is another. I just don't believe that most of the people who can't stop crying about the length of games will suddenly turn into die-hard baseball fanatics just because the game is a half-hour shorter.

I have friends who tell me they'll pay more attention. But I know for a fact that on a nice summer night, their decision to watch or not watch a baseball game won't hinge upon a pitch clock posted on a backstop. Ultimately, I think the people who will continue to watch baseball are the people who actually enjoy watching baseball. Simple enough.

To quote the movie Bull Durham, "This is a very simple game. You throw the ball, you catch the ball, you hit the ball. Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose, and sometimes it rains."

Not, "sometimes you don't get a pitch off in time, resulting in an automatic ball, and a fine for excessive stalling."

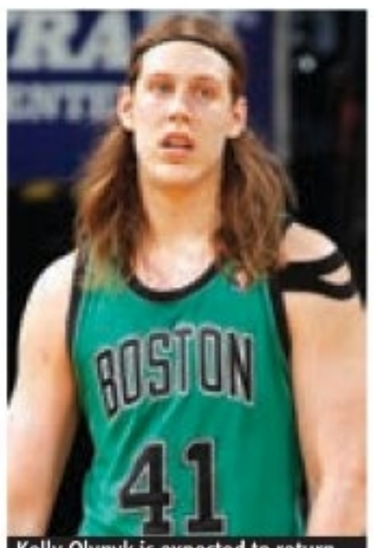
Look, this isn't a movie. And I'm not actually saying it's an easy game to play. But as someone who watches baseball because I love to watch — not love to complain — I don't want to see the commissioner overreact to criticism from those who probably won't watch even when they do implement a pitch clock.

Those people will probably just find something else to complain about. And Major League Baseball will be stuck with a useless stopwatch hanging from its neck.

Pitchers like Clay Buchholz will soon be forced to speed things up a bit.
GETTY IMAGES

3 SPORTS

Visit **Metro.us** to see where Leonard Williams falls in our latest NFL mock draft.



Kelly Olynyk is expected to return from injury in the coming days.
GETTY IMAGES

NBA. Charlotte first up in huge stretch for Celtics

The Celtics have won two games in a row heading into their home Friday date against the Hornets (7:30 p.m., CSNNE).

The matchup against Charlotte suddenly has significance in the form of Eastern Conference playoff positioning as the 22-33 C's are just a game back of the 23-32 Hornets in the standings. Brooklyn currently holds the eighth spot in the East with a 23-32 record.

The Celtics would be wise to take care of business Friday against Charlotte as they have a monster week ahead of them. They host the team with the best record in the NBA on Sunday in the Warriors (6 p.m.) before taking on the Cavaliers in Cleveland Tuesday (7 p.m., CSNNE). Boston immediately returns home Wednesday to take on Utah. MATT BURKE

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